

IN THE CLAIMS:

The claims have been amended as follows:

Claim 50 (Amended) An improved port control module for use in a fibre channel switching fabric comprising:

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a fibre channel input/output port for connection to a link,
an encoder/decoder in communication with the input/output port, and
a buffer,

the improvement comprising the inclusion of buffer overrun prevention logic between the encoder/decoder and the buffer, the buffer overrun prevention logic tagging, but not terminating, words that overrun the buffer.

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Claim 52 (Amended) The improved port control module for use in a fibre channel switching fabric of claim 50 where the buffer overrun prevention logic sets tag bits to a unique value indicative of an overrun conditions.

Claim 53 (Amended) A method for control of an input buffer, where the input buffer is adapted to receive a stream of data at a rate which is not subject to control by the buffer, comprising the steps of:

receiving fibre channel data,
placing the data in the buffer,
monitoring for an overflow condition,
and if an overflow condition is detected, including a detectable signal in association

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with the data, including providing tag bits, but not terminating, data that overrun the buffer,
and

providing the data from the buffer and the detectable signal to subsequent devices.

The following new claims have been added:

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56. (New) An interconnect system having a plurality of ports transferring
received Fibre Channel frames between multiple attached devices comprising,

a first port control module supporting a first link speed,

a second port control module supporting a second link speed, the second link
speed different from the first port link speed,

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a third port control module supporting a third link speed, the third link speed
is the same as either the first port control module link speed or the second port control
module link speed,

a connectivity apparatus coupled to each port control module, affecting the
transfer of frames between any two ports,

the connectivity apparatus supporting a fixed frame transfer rate, the same for
each frame transferred between any two ports.

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57. (New) The interconnect system of Claim 56 wherein the fixed frame transfer
rate includes a fixed number of active data signals for all data transfers.

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~~58~~. (New) The interconnect system of Claim ~~56~~⁶ wherein the path or number of data signals connecting any two port control modules over the connectivity apparatus during a frame transfer is fixed and does not change.

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~~59~~. (New) The interconnect system of Claim ~~58~~⁶ wherein the connectivity apparatus is clocked at the same frequency for every frame.

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~~60~~. (New) An interconnect system having a plurality of ports for routing received Fibre Channel frames between multiple attached devices comprising,

a first port control module supporting a first link speed,

a second port control module supporting a second link speed, the second link speed different from the first port link speed,

a third port control module supporting a third link speed, the third link speed is the same as either the first port control module link speed or the second port control module link speed,

a connectivity apparatus coupled to the first port and the second port for selective interconnection there-between,

the connectivity apparatus transferring frames using a constant number of data signals and a constant clock rate, having the same values between any two ports.

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~~61~~. (New) A method for sending Fibre Channel frames between ports in a switch, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving an incoming frame at a first Fibre Channel port at a first link speed,
determining the destination port to route the first Fibre Channel frame,
the destination port's link speed being different from the first Fibre Channel
port,

transferring the Fibre Channel frame from the first port to the destination port
through a connectivity apparatus coupled to the first and the destination ports,

the connectivity apparatus transferring the frame at a fixed throughput that
does not change with the link speed.

762. (New) The interconnect system of Claim 31 wherein the fixed throughput
applied to the frames is the same value.

763. (New) A method for sending frames between a Fibre Channel network at one
speed and a Gigabit Ethernet network at another speed, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving an incoming frame at a first Fibre Channel port at a first speed,
determining the destination port to route the first Fibre Channel frame,
the destination port comprising a Gigabit Ethernet network,
transferring the Fibre Channel frame from the first port to a protocol
conversion module through a connectivity apparatus, the connectivity apparatus
transferring all frames using a constant number of data signals and a constant clock
rate,

converting the Fibre Channel frame to a frame format compatible to being

bf transmitted on a Gigabit Ethernet network,

transmitting the frame out the Gigabit Ethernet port.
